

Brian A. Catlos

Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom c. 1050–1614 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 628 pp., ISBN: 9780521889391 £65.00.

Brian A. Catlos' monograph provides a conduit for approaching Muslims, and an Islamic presence, in the Medieval Latin West as a phenomenon across various regions all under Christian dominion: Granada, Castile, Navarre, Portugal, Sicily, North Africa, the Levant as well as Eastern Europe, Hungary and Lithuania in particular. Scholarly investigations into the presence of Muslim communities in the Latin West, which have yielded substantial insights into the contribution of Islamic developments in agriculture, architecture, art, science and philosophy, have been generally confined to Islamic Spain and Sicily. Muslim communities continued to live, work and survive under Christian dominion, post-*reconquista*, during Norman reign and in the Latin Crusader strongholds in the Frankish East, but a comparative and collective study of these communities across the Medieval West has been sorely missing. Such an approach is the defining characteristic of Catlos' study, which provides insights into communities across Europe, and never fails to emphasize the diversity and changing experiences of all of those encompassed under the term Muslim. Whilst paying close attention to the Arab Muslims, the *Moriscos* (converted Christians of Muslim descendants), and *mudéjars* (free Muslims) of Christian Spain, we also find Muslims called the *Bashghird*, who did not identify themselves as Arab, from the lower Volga settling in Hungary in the eleventh century.

The study begins in c.1050, where Islamic rule was faltering in al-Andalus and fractious in Sicily, but where Muslim populations were settled and made significant contributions to both Mediterranean locales. 1614 marks the end, in some ways, of 900 years of Islam in Iberia, with the final forcible departure of the remaining *Morisco* inhabitants, which began with the formal expulsion order in 1609. Through these five years, a total of 300,000 *Moriscos* were expelled; a number twenty times that of the Spanish Jews who were expelled when they refused to convert to Christianity in 1492.

In an investigation carefully entitled *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom* (emphasis mine), Catlos successfully manages to position Muslim narratives at the forefront of a series of communities; those which comprised of a majority of indigenous people who converted to Islam and identified with its Arabo-Islamic culture, as well as Muslim Arabs who had initially settled in these regions. Catlos frames these viewpoints alongside the position and attitude taken by a score of different Christian rulers towards their Muslim subjects, such as Alfonso VI of Castile and Leon (c.1040–1109), Peter IV of Aragon (1319–1387) and Manuel I of Portugal (1469–1521). Many of these Muslim communities

thrived under Christian dominion; they were integrated and successful. For instance, we find in 1495, on his visit to Zaragoza, the German traveler Hieronymus Münzer, noted a popular saying, 'He with no Muslims, has no money', demonstrating the economic value of the *mudejar* farming community (p. 221). Others were commercial traders, skilled craftsmen, artisans and physicians in royal households. Yet, many also suffered worse fates, for instance, Manuel I of Portugal between May and September 1496 expelled his Muslim subjects, while ordering the forced conversion of their Jewish counterparts.

A comprehensive and yet detailed account of the many different communities across a vast time period is provided concisely through the division of material. The first half provides a chronological account of the settlement and movement of Muslim communities, starting with the Iberian Peninsula, to which two chapters are dedicated, before moving on to Italy and North Africa, the Latin East and then returning to Christian Spain. Catlos assiduously dedicates a chapter to the *Bashghird* of Hungary and sheds light on the Muslim Tartars known as *Lipqa* or *Lubqa*, who settled in Lithuania from 1383 onwards, alongside traders, slaves and hostages from North Africa and the Middle East who were forced to move across Latin Christendom.

The second half focuses thematically on the cultural and social integration of these communities. It considers the economic and social position of Muslims, as well as their status in law, royal and canon, fiscal administration, and their cultural and religious identity. One of the many intriguing features raised is the notion of the fluidity of identity, particularly in Christian Spain during the later Middle Ages; by 1614 the identities of the Moriscos are both Christian and Muslim, neither fully one nor the other. Catlos provides an extract from an inquisition in 1484 of a female called Ursula/Fatima, who has allegedly and variously converted from both Christianity to Islam, and vice versa, according to different witnesses. Such a fluidity of identity is representative of the several significant cultural, social and linguistic commonalities between communities of Christians, Muslims and Jews, where they traded together, speaking the same language and eating the same food, rendering it all too easy for Ursula/ Fatima to switch between identities.

To sum up, this is an impressive, detailed, nuanced and scholarly approach that demonstrates the plurality of identities in Latin Christendom. Catlos not only demonstrates the integral and successful position of most of the Muslim communities, but also demonstrates that their contribution was essential to the shaping of European culture. By providing localized examples and contextualizing the complex history of Muslims (and all of the different ethnicities it encompasses) and Christians, Catlos provides an insight into religion in the Middle Ages that does not rely on the stock trope of Islam and Christianity

constantly pitted against each other. Instead, Catlos describes a world where a royal order in Castile can declare 'All of our Faithful Muslim Subjects', where Christians adopted Arabo-Islamic cultural habits, but also where forced conversions and expulsions were ordered and carried out.

Shazia Jagot

University of Southern Denmark

shazia.jagot@gmail.com